

REMARKS

Claims 2-11 and 15-18 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, new claims 15-18 are added. Support for new claims 15-18 can be found in the specification as originally filed and in original claims 1 and 12-14. Claims 2-10 have been amended to depend from new claim 15 and to further clarify the subject matter recited therein. Support for the amendments to claims 2-11 can be found in claims 1-11 as originally filed and in the specification as originally filed. Also by this Amendment, claims 1 and 12-14 have been canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter set forth therein.

Applicant appreciates the courtesies shown to Applicant's representative by Examiner Cain in the March 3, 2004 personal interview. As discussed in the interview, the rejection is overcome by the amendments and the arguments herein. Applicant's separate record of the substance of the interview is incorporated into the following remarks.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-14 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over French Patent FR 2,763,547. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

As an initial matter, Applicant submits that FR 2,763,547 corresponds to U.S. Patent 6,231,094 to Uytterhaeghe et al., which is cited in the attached Information Disclosure Statement. In the interests of furthering prosecution and clarity of response, Applicant has cited to the U.S. Patent in addition to the cited French-language reference.

Claims 1 and 12-14 have been canceled by this Amendment, and new claims 15-18 have been added. In the interests of furthering prosecution, the rejection under §102(b) is treated as a rejection of pending claims 2-11 and 15-18.

FR 2,763,547 is cited for its disclosure of automobile bumpers and methods for producing such bumpers. FR 2,763,547 discloses methods that include the use of two compositions, a fiber-reinforced drapeable material and a thermoplastic material, for charging the mold, and placing both materials into the mold before the mold is closed.

Independent claim 15, from which claims 2-10 depend, sets forth, in pertinent part, "providing a mold having a setback with a width; [and] providing at least one sheet and at least one local reinforcement insert, at least one of the sheet and the insert comprising reinforcing fibers and thermoplastic material, said insert having a width smaller than the width of the setback." In contrast to claim 15, FR 2,763,547 and the corresponding U.S. patent disclose a method comprising placing inserts (11) between two sheets (14) of drapeable thermoplastic material, so that during the closing of the mold, the flowing of the thermoplastic material does not displace the inserts in an undesirable manner. See Uytterhaeghe, col. 2, lines 47-52. FR 2,763,547 and Uytterhaeghe do not disclose a mold with a setback having a width and at least one local reinforcement insert having a width smaller than the width of the setback. Thus, FR 2,763,547 and Uytterhaeghe do not disclose all of the features of claim 15, or its dependent claims.

Independent claim 16 sets forth, in pertinent part, "closing the mold, ... and injecting a thermoplastic material into the setback such as to compact the insert and at least one second region of the sheet adjacent to the insert." In contrast to claim 16, FR 2,763,547 and Uytterhaeghe disclose a method in which a plastic material (15) is introduced into the mold when the mold is open. See FR 2,763,547, Fig. 4; Uytterhaeghe, claim 1. The cited reference does not disclose injecting the plastics material into the mold after the mold is closed. Thus, FR 2,763,547 and Uytterhaeghe do not disclose all of the features of claim 16.

Independent claim 17 sets forth, in pertinent part, "said thermoplastic material coming into contact with the insert." Independent claim 11 sets forth, in pertinent part, a "part made of reinforced thermoplastic material comprising a non-plane sheet comprising glass fibers and thermoplastic material, locally lined by at least one local reinforcement insert on which a mass of thermoplastic material is overmolded." In contrast to claims 17 and 11, FR 2,763,547 and Uytterhaeghe disclose that the plastics material (15) is placed on a sheet

(14) and does not come into contact with the inserts (11) sandwiched between the sheets. See FR 2,763,547, Fig. 4; Uytterhaeghe, col. 2, lines 47-52. The cited reference does not disclose that the thermoplastics material specifically comes into contact with the insert, as claimed. Thus, FR 2,763,547 and Uytterhaeghe do not disclose all of the features of claims 17 and 11.

Independent claim 18 sets forth, in pertinent part, "introducing thermoplastic material into the setback in such a manner as to compact the local reinforcement and the underlying region of the sheet, the mold being shaped to compress the sheet on either side of the local reinforcement during closure of the mold; and after closure of the mold, trimming off said at least one portion[that projects outside the mold]." In contrast to claim 18, FR 2,763,547 and Uytterhaeghe do not disclose trimming off a sheet portion projecting outside the mold after closing the mold. Thus, FR 2,763,547 and Uytterhaeghe do not disclose all of the features of claim 18.

For at least the above reasons and as discussed during the March 3 interview, claims 2-11 and 15-18 are patentable over FR 2,763,547. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 2-11 and 15-18 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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WPB:JMS/jms

Attachment:
Information Disclosure Statement w/ 1 reference

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